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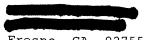


To: yose_planning@nps.gov

cc:

Subject: Loop road rehabilitation

REUL. LU JUN 01 2005



Fresno, CA 93755

1 June 2005

Superintendent, Yosemite National Park Yosemite Valley Loop Road Rehabilitation P.O. Box 577 Yosemite, CA 95389

Fax: 209/379-1294

This is being emailed to: yose_planning@nps.gov

Sir:

The following comments are submitted on behalf of the Sierra Club. Thank you for this opportunity to make suggestions which hopefully will be of use to you in your efforts to protect the visitor experience and the natural resources of Yosemite National Park.

These are scoping comments on the Yosemite Valley Loop Road Rehabilitation Project.

The Fact Sheet (4/05) for this project leaves room for interpretation. On the one hand it seems critical of roadside parking. (Last two sentences of first paragraph: "...Roadside parking is, for the most part, user designated..." and "...This haphazard parking continues....") On the other hand, the last paragraph speaks of "...defining and/or formalizing existing roadside parking...."

So will this project result in obliteration of all unpaved turnouts, or paving of all of them?

Fortunately, you have provided us with the detailed annotated drawings which show the NPS thinking at the thirty percent stage of the planning process (September 28-29, 2004). We have gone over these drawings in some detail, comparing much of it with on-the-ground inspection.

The study of these drawings indicates that you are proposing to obliterate relatively few of the unpaved turnouts, and propose to pave some of them. But this is only at the thirty percent stage, and we realize there could be drastic changes in the plan.

So a couple ISSUES we wish to raise are:

1. How can this project best accommodate the need to provide ample opportunities for the visitor to stop and absorb the magnificent scenery? Regardless of whether the visitor is in a car or a bus, that opportunity should be enhanced, not impaired. That probably means paving some of the unpaved turnouts.

2. Are there some turnouts which are impacting the resources so greatly that they need to be closed? A rationale needs to be provided for closures, as well as for paving. The rationale should consist of something more than administrative convenience. And it needs to be kept in mind that visitors have found reason to park there, or the turnout wouldn't have become established. Scenic vistas are not the only places where parking is needed.

Since the existing Valley shuttle bus system is grossly inadequate, the only practical way for people to see most of the Valley is by using private vehicles. And the visitors will continue to need to park their vehicles in order to experience the Valley in whatever ways they choose, be it viewing scenery, wildlife, the ever-changing patterns of sunlight, or cloud, mist, rain, and snow; or photography, hiking, and rock climbing; or, especially, simply sitting quietly in some secluded area, absorbing the magic which surrounds them.

All of these activities require that the visitor get out of whatever vehicle they have arrived in, and that means parking must be provided. Yes, even for buses.

ISSUE: What is the impact of this project on the quality of the visitor experience? And that includes the need to park, including buses.

Specific comments follow:

The Woskey Pond turnout should be extended so there is more opportunity for visitors to appreciate this world-famous view of Cathedral Rocks and the Spires. A sign ("Scenic vista ahead") should be placed east of this turnout to alert drivers to the fact that it is coming up, as it is very easily missed by the inexperienced.

Such signs should be placed before other scenic turnouts which are easy to miss unless one knows to watch for them. Ones which come to mind on Northside Drive are Bridalveil/Leaning Tower, and Valley View.

ISSUE: Can vista clearance be made part of this project? Turnouts are part of the project, and much of the value of the turnout is lost if the view is obstructed. Alders (?) are rapidly obstructing much of the scenery at Valley View, and there are other turnouts where the problem is much worse.

ISSUE: The NPS suggests that large trees might be removed at some locations. An adequate rationale needs to be provided. And the value of the tree upon delivery to the mill should NOT be part of it.

ISSUE: Why are large, scenic trees being cut, while dense thickets of smaller trees are allowed to grow unfettered, choking out the scenery?

It is proposed to pave the defacto parking strips where the El Cap Crossover joins Northside Drive. The lines of vehicles parked in that location are exceptionally intrusive; because westbound traffic on Northside Drive comes at them broadside, the visual impact of the parked vehicles is greatly magnified. Parking in that highly visible location should be blocked off. Parking in that location is not even needed, as there is almost always unused parking toward the west end of the El Cap Straight.

ISSUE: What is the justification for formalizing this highly

offensive parking?

The proposal contains great emphasis on making it impossible for vehicles to get out of the driving lanes except at designated turnouts. When a vehicle, including a bus, becomes inoperative, and there is no place to stop except in the middle of a driving lane, there is an obvious safety hazard. This is especially true if there are only two lanes, one in each direction, as the Valley Plan calls for on Southside Drive.

ISSUE: Can the dangerous condition created by blocking road shoulders be justified? Couldn't the concept of "Emergency Parking Only" be implemented, as it is in other areas?

The jury seems to be out on the issue of whether rows of boulders or asphalt/concrete/granite curbs are preferable.

ISSUE: What are the pros and cons of each different type of barrier.

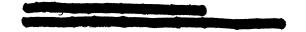
On Chapel Straight there is a question as to the treatment of the separation between the parking strip and the trail. A drawing suggests two retaining walls, leaving a rather barren area between the two walls. Trying to achieve a natural appearance for this separation strip clearly will be a problem.

ISSUE: How can the separation between vehicle surface and trail best be given a more natural appearance? (It's not good now, and the drawing suggests it could become worse.)

COMMENT ON PROCESS: It would vastly facilitate commenting on specific turnouts if each one had an identifying number on the map. Perhaps based on the exact distance from a starting reference point, as is done with structures along highways. The same would be true of the culverts. Don't the maintenance people have some way of identifying which culvert they are talking about?

CONCLUSION: This project, while seemingly non-controversial, nevertheless has the potential to become very controversial. All you have to do is start closing down a few popular turnouts, or sending scenic big trees to the mill, and suddenly you will have the public's attention. We urge a renewed effort to let the public know what you are proposing so they can express their opinions in an informed way.

We greatly appreciate your having provided us with the detailed drawings, but it was only through happenstance that we learned that we needed to make the inquiry. We do look forward to continuing to work constructively with you on this project.



June 1, 2005

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RECEIVED JUN 01 2005

Superintendent

Attn: Rehabilitation of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road

P.O. Box 577

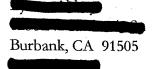
Yosemite, CA 95389

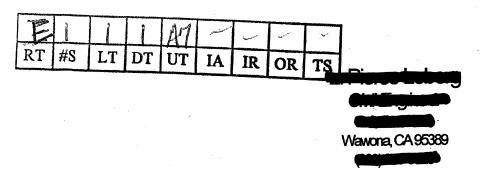
I've been visiting Yosemite National Park since 1948 and I love the park dearly. This particular project is badly needed and I support it 100%.

Too many novice visitors park haphazardly and create dangerous driving conditions for other cars and visitors and they damage the fragile environment by their willy nilly and inconsiderate parking. We see it all the time and it's a wonder more people and cars aren't hit. Formally defined parking areas will be a big improvement.

In a separate issue, I want to share with you that my family and I think the Yosemite Falls project is positively beautiful, and I was very skeptical at first. The finished project exemplifies the care and planning that the NPS has undertaken to keep Yosemite open and magnificent for all to see.

Thank you.





YVL-P3-Pg 19, 2 RECEIVED JUN 01 2005

FAX: 209 379 1294

June 1, 2005

Mr. Michael J. Tollefson Superintendent, Yosemite National Park P.O. Box 577 Yosemite, CA 95389

REF: Rehabilitation of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road

Environmental Assessment

Dear Mike:

I thank you for the opportunity to provide Scoping Comments on the above referenced project.

This project may have been misnamed. Rehabilitation of a road by doing overdue maintenance and repair does not trigger an Environmental Assessment. What this project is really about, is making changes in roadside parking.

Although it is proposed that there are to be no changes in parking capacity, the thrust of the project is to curb user-designated parking. Eliminating the user's ability to stop and park <u>does</u> change the total parking capacity.

Parking capacity in Yosemite Valley has been previously addressed but never completely. Before the NPS proposes further limitations on parking, a fair and honest appraisal of where designated parking existed in the past would yield a total parking capacity for Yosemite Valley. Revealing that number to the public would aid in understanding what is already being done to limit public access.

There are many instances of roadside parking currently being used to compensate for previously designated off-road parking areas which have been eliminated. Two glaring examples are at Yosemite Lodge and Yosemite Village where temporary employee housing has been constructed in designated parking areas. Will these paved areas be returned to public parking once new employee housing is finished near Curry Village?

In the past, the NPS accommodated the needs of the visitor by purposefully creating and maintaining views and providing roadside parking. In recent times, this has not been done.

Over the years, the NPS has used various methods to control haphazard roadside parking. Ditches and more recently large, unfriendly boulders have been employed. Now it is proposed to formalize roadside parking with curbs. I have noticed how urban parks avoid curb, gutter and sidewalk to achieve a more rural environment and Yosemite is doing the opposite.

YV1-P3-B292

Page 2
 June 1, 2005

Although no widening or realignment of the roadway is proposed in this project, consideration should be given to re-establishing adequate lane width and shoulders for safety. The one-way road system established 35 years ago in Yosemite Valley by D. Jackson Faustman should be retained. California fire-safe regulations require secondary egress which is especially important in a popular location such as Yosemite Valley.

The new Hybrid buses in Yosemite provide a pleasant experience for visitors. Large vehicles, however, require adequate lane widths and turning radii, both of which should be addressed in this project. Pavement design should consider bus and truck traffic as well. An example of repeated pavement failure is in the bus loop in front of the Village Store.

The portion of Southside Drive between Housekeeping Camp and the Curry Village intersection should be included in the project. Intersection re-design should provide additional width for turn lanes where necessary and safe pedestrian crossings.

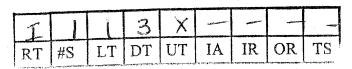
I appreciate opportunity to provide Scoping Comments for this project. I trust that the public's input on this project will be given the consideration required by law.

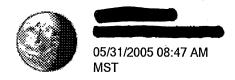
Sincerely,

Civil Engineer

CC:

Hon. George Radanovich, Member of Congress Donald W. Murphy, Deputy Director NPS Matthew J. McKeown, Special Assistant to the Solicitor Jon Jarvis, Regional Director NPS





To: yose_planning@nps.gov cc: Subject: loop road comments YVL-P-4-19 173

Superintendent
Attn: East Yosemite Valley Utilities Improvement Plan
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

May 29, 2005

Subject: Rehabilitation of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road

Dear Mr. Tollefson:

I want to thank you and your staff for providing us with the 30% preliminary report and field review for the Yosemite Valley Loop Road Project. It has been very useful for submitting comment on the loop road proposal.

General Comment:

There are numerous Valley sites where wetlands are being deprived of moisture due to insufficient drainage. Expanding the size and number of road culverts to return drainage channels to natural flow patterns should be a major consideration in both the planning and implementation stages of the project. The present road width and alignment should be maintained and with some relatively minor adjustments in location the current pullout /parking space capacity should be maintained. Removing unsightly roadside boulders and replacing them with asphalt or concrete curbing should be done wherever possible to prevent encroachment into sensitive resource areas. Curbing should not be used in non-sensitive areas to minimize infrastructure where it is not essential and to allow parking for emergency or disabled vehicles. Asphalt paving may be preferred to rock or gravel base in most turnouts as it has greater endurance and can be more easily removed if future changes are warranted.

Specific Comment:

Beginning at Pohono Bridge on Southside drive I will comment by sheet number top or bottom.

Southside Drive:

Sheet C. 1 Top: Pave and curb gravel turnout on curve at lower right of panel.

Sheet C. 3 Bottom: Remove informal pullout-no view-poor road visibility. Replace barrier stones with asphalt or concrete curbing.

Sheet C. 6 Bottom: Left end of panel-obliterate informal pullout as suggested. Center right pave and curb pullout as good view of Sentinel Rock is afforded here.

Sheet C. 8 Top and Bottom: Could curbing replace unsightly barrier stones along this section of road?

Sheet C. 9 Top: Do not remove large Ponderosa and Black Oak (impacting?) road. Sheet C.9 Top and Bottom: I suggest a high priority be given to maintaining the approximately 6 foot wide vegetation strip along this section of road between the bicycle lane and pullout parking. This strip could be replanted with low growing native shrubs, providing a natural condition to mitigate the combined impacts of roadway, bikeway and parking along this visually sensitive and highly scenic area.

Northside Drive:

Sheet C. 18 Top: Why not pave and curb eastern existing dirt pullout?

Sheet C. 18 Bottom: The large size and location of the Big Oak pullout might be used to accommodate increased or decreased capacity of pullouts in other road sections. A small change in capacity in other areas could be accommodated here without much impact. Also pavement would be preferred over gravel-dust potholes etc. Obliterate small pullout across road as indicated.

Sheet C. 19 Bottom: Is pullout needed here directly across from El Capitan picnic area where parking is available out of traffic flow? These spaces could be expanded in the next pullout west (C. 19 Bottom right) and provide additional parking for a very short walk to the Woski Pond view sight.

Sheet C. 20 Top: Here is a major concern. The existing limited pullout is located at one of west Valley's most famous views. A high priority should be given to expanding this roadside parking area. Expanding pullout capacity east at least 50 feet and possibly to the west as well could be accomplished without impacting resource values. The single small 10-15 foot Yellow Pine at the east end of the existing pullout should be removed to accommodate expansion as it presently is or soon will impact culvert drainage. Visitor impacts to the adjacent wetland could be controlled with appropriate "re-vegetation in progress", signs. This view site is depicted in the popular Rufus Graphics Map and Guide to Yosemite Valley as Cathedral Spires Vista, and is often seen in popular photographs of Yosemite Valley. Additional pullout parking should be expanded here and reduced in kind at other less important or undesirable sites.

Sheet C. 21 & 25 Top panel left end both sheets: El Capitan cross over Y. I strongly recommend eliminating visitor parking here on both sides of the roadway. Visual impacts of vehicles in this location

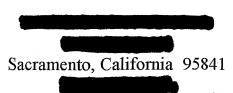
are significantly greater than in other areas due to the approach angle of vehicles especially when returning to east Valley destinations from Northside drive. Clear views of El Capitan from this site are obscured by tall trees to the northwest forcing visitors to walk into El Capitan meadow for clear views of El Capitan. Impacts to riverbanks and meadow areas would be significantly less if both these pullouts were eliminated. Vehicles parked along El Capitan straight are objectionable too but they are not as visually apparent as those parked at the Y crossover intersection. Loss of parking here could be made up at other sites i.e. Woski Pond, Big Oak, or further west at the Ribbon Creek pullout Sheet C. 21 Lower panel.

Sheet C. 23 Top: Could paved ditch be routed around "large oak"?

Sheet C. 25 Bottom: Center pullout. Good views of El Capitan from here. Pave and curb. Obliterate informal pullout left end of panel.

These are some of our preliminary thoughts on the project. As the planning process moves forward we will hope to continue working with Park staff to develop a final loop road proposal. Thanks for listening.

El Dorado Hills, CA. 95762



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May 31, 2005

Re: Rehabilitation of the Yosemite Valley Loop Road.

While on the surface this is a fairly straight forward project, two items are of lasting importance to many visitors to the Yosemite Valley. First is of both historical importances as well as the ambience is the stone works along the roads in and out of the valley. While you have stated that you will attempt to preserve stone headwalls and culverts, you have also stated that "Existing stone masonary at culvert headwalls and outlets may be salvaged and reused." Attempt and May it not much reassurance that a real effort will be make to preserve and restore these historic stone works. Please make an effort and reassure us that it will be done.

Second, the turnouts created and used by visitors are a nuisance to park staff and park planners. But one thing I did learn both in collage and working in state parks is that visitors often will make you rethink how best to present and preserve our natural resources for their enjoyment. In this case lack of effort on your part has created turnouts and parking in areas that often are not the best for the visitor or the resources to be preserved. But this does not mean that clearly posted instruction that turnout are for short term observation of the scenic vistas, and the parking is limited to 15 minutes and visitors must be in near their cars in small parallel parking spots are not of value to both. Clearly marked and post time limits and instructions and interruptive signage to help the visitor enjoy their experience is often an easier way to move the visitor along. And also reminding them that other would like to view what they are looking at.

Please remember that the roads are there, their present does represent a historical period in the time line of the Valley. Early automotive trips in 1900's to the Yosemite Valley are celebrated in the then new magazine "Sunset" and the work done thought out the Sierra Nevada Mts. Roads during the 30's are a part of the Valley history.

I hope to see some comments in the next newsletter on the flooding in the campgrounds along the Merced River. I am mainly concerned how the permanent structures such as restroom s, campsite equipment, and roads faired. With the plans for restoring these areas in the flood plain, are we looking at the best placement of the sites?

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

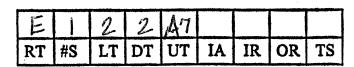


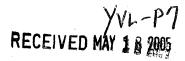
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All interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are invited to provide suggestions during public review of any project. Please submit written cor Yosemite National Park, P. O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389 (Attn: <n (209)="" (in="" 379-1294.="" <name="" also="" be="" comments="" electronic="" faxed="" line="" m="" may="" of="" project="" subject="" the="" to:="" type:="" yose_planning@nps.gov="">).</n>	nmerl Iame	t s to: of Pr	Sup o oject	!rinte >). W	nden	IR	C
Note : Anonymous comments will not be considered. If you do not want your name public disclosure, please state that at the beginning of your comments. Such requestent allowable by law. Generally, National Park Service will make available to promorganizations or businesses and from persons identifying themselves as reporganizations and businesses.	uests v oublic i	will be inspec	hono	red to Il subi	the missior		
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THE NEXT PULLOUT AFTER FERN SPRING SHOULD
NOT BE PAVED FOR THE PROTECTION OF THAT WATER
SOURCE AS WELL.







05/18/2005 08:32 AM PDT To: YOSE Planning@NPS

Subject: NS & SS Drive comment

The project to resurface Northside and Southside Drives should include raising the elevation of the road surface about one foot in four locations to avoid having to close access into and out of Yosemite Valley during minor flood events. The locations include Chapel Straight on Southside Dr; the low areas on either side of Middle Brother Slide and the area from Waski Pond to Devils Elbow on Northside Dr. Other areas were effected by the recent flood but were due to inadequate culvert sizes or locations. It is my understanding that this project already includes culvert improvements. The areas of Bridalveil, Sentinel, Eagle and Ribbon Creeks had water overflowing the road and should be addressed. The area of Humpback Bridge on Northside Dr was also effected but I do not suggest elevating the road in this location as long as the above mentioned improvements to Northside Drive are implemented. Access to and from the Lodge could occur using Northside Drive to the west. The approaches to Humpback have previously been elevated and any further increases would be a detriment to this historic feature and a new bridge is planned for vehicle traffic near this location in the future.

It is not uncommon to have high water events during the spring runoff and to have to limit or close access to the Valley during these periods is a health and safety concern as well as a disservice to Park visitors, employees and families. Over the years the Park has made most other facilities less vulnerable to flooding by elevating, relocating or flood proofing them. The roads throughout the Valley are the remaining critical facility that need to be addressed.

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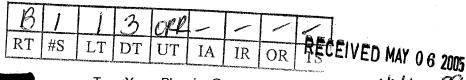
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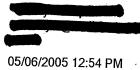
Subject: Fem Spring

The attached documents are the PIF and XXX for the Fern Spring Restoration Project for AICMC review and comment. Note that the target start date is July 1, 2005. I will send a hard copy to via snail mail.









To: <Yose_Planning@nps.gov>

ce:

Subject: Yosemite Planning and Loop Road Information

MST

To whom it may concern:

I understand that Yosemite Planning is going through the process to rehabilitate Yosemite Loop Road. Our company is interested in attending the scoping session in May as well as understanding and participating in the planning process of Yosemite.

Our company, is interested in working with Yosemite in the future. Provides public and private professional services including Planning, Civil Engineering, Construction Management, Mechanical Engineering, Public Works Administration, Surveying, GIS, Water Resources, and Sustainable Wastewater treatment design. We are based out of San Luis Obispo, just 2.5 hours away from Yosemite.

I understand it may be late in the process to be involved and offer our services, but we would like to take part in future endeavors at the park that can benefit from our experience and background in planning and engineering while maintaining a sustainable approach. I would appreciate any information on how Yosemite carries out the engineering/planning portion of their projects (i.e. is it taken care of in house, sole sourced, RFP's sent out, etc.)

I would appreciate any information you could give me in these matters, or if you could put me in contact with the appropriate authority to discuss these issues.

We look forward to working with Yosemite and the National Parks in the future.

Sincerely,

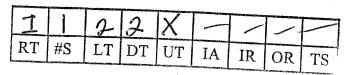
San Luis Obispo, Ca 93401

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To: Yose_Planning@nps.gov

Subject: Rehabilitation of Valley Loop Road EA

YVL-Pio

RECEIVED MAY 0 6 2005

05/06/2005 09:31 AM **AST**

In connection with this project, I want to point out that the Yosemite Valley Plan (page 2-49) calls for the eventual conversion of

"Southside Drive from El Capitan crossover to Curry Village to two-way traffic, one lane each direction (road widened where necessary)

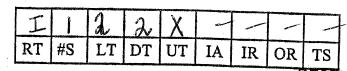
Northside Drive from El Capitan crossover to Yosemite Lodge from a vehicle road to a multi-use (bicycle and pedestrian) paved trail"

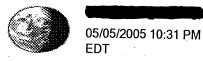
I hope that whatever work is done in connection with this proposed rehabilitation will be done with this eventual goal in mind.

And I hope that whatever work is done on Northside Drive will keep in mind that, even after it turns into a paved trail, it will be needed for general purpose automobile traffic in cases of emergency. (For example fire in the Valley, or rockslides on the Southside Drive.)

Sincerely,

Oberlin, OH 44074





To: yose_planning@nps.gov

Subject: Improvements to Loup Road

RECEIVED MAY 05 2005 YVL-PII

Planning group:

The improvements as proposed sound to be very good. I approve of the plan!

I suggest that the cost of admission to the park be increased to pay for this improvement and for other future improvements. Seniors can pay also.